

of the American fellow travelers toward the war. Now people considered the U.S.S.R. an innocent victim of Hitler's aggression. Stalin became a hero.

We realized, of course, that Hitler's attack on Russia was a blessing for Great Britain and its Allies from a purely military point of view. The political implications of the new development were another matter. The ideological meaning of the war was blurred. Before June, 1941, a bloc of democratic nations opposed the three totalitarian countries—Germany and Italy in the front line, with the U.S.S.R. in the rear. Now the ideological unity of the anti-Nazi bloc was destroyed. Many American liberals held that the Hitler-Stalin clash was not a split in the camp of enemies of democracy but the beginning of a new Holy War of the forces of freedom led by Stalin against the legions of evil headed by Hitler. They argued that the best thing the United States could do now was to follow the Red generalissimo.

December 7, 1941: Pearl Harbor! The bombs brought to light new features in the American character. The country, utterly unprepared for a major war, took up arms, confident it would master the situation. I do not remember having met anybody who expressed doubt of our final victory. Industrial mobilization went on with unexpected success: "What is difficult we do at once. The impossible will take a little longer."

The war became a test of all the material and moral forces of American civilization. This was the decisive hour predicted by F.D.R. The country passed the test with flying colors.

A chain of reverses marked the beginning of the war. The United States had only a few fully equipped divisions and practically no air force. It had insufficient cadres of trained officers and no military traditions. The bulk of its navy was destroyed by the Japanese in the first attack. Political and military leaders realized the seriousness of the situation. Foreign observers in Washington doubted whether there would be time enough for the United States to train and arm troops and take them to the battlefields before Hitler's final triumph over the free world. But the man in the street simply did not believe the United States could be licked.

The other striking feature was the nation's genius at improvisation. Long-range systematic planning is obviously not in the national character of the United States. Either people do not have enough patience to plan in advance or they do not believe that detailed plans can be of great help in case of emergency; they prefer, rather, to reduce advance thinking to a minimum, relying heavily on last-minute decisions.

The most recent developments in military technology and strategy may have changed this attitude, but in 1942-43 the industrial and military mobilization was a chain of amazing improvisations rather